

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Nebraska State Plan

**Presented by the
Nebraska Special Education Advisory Council
through the work of the**

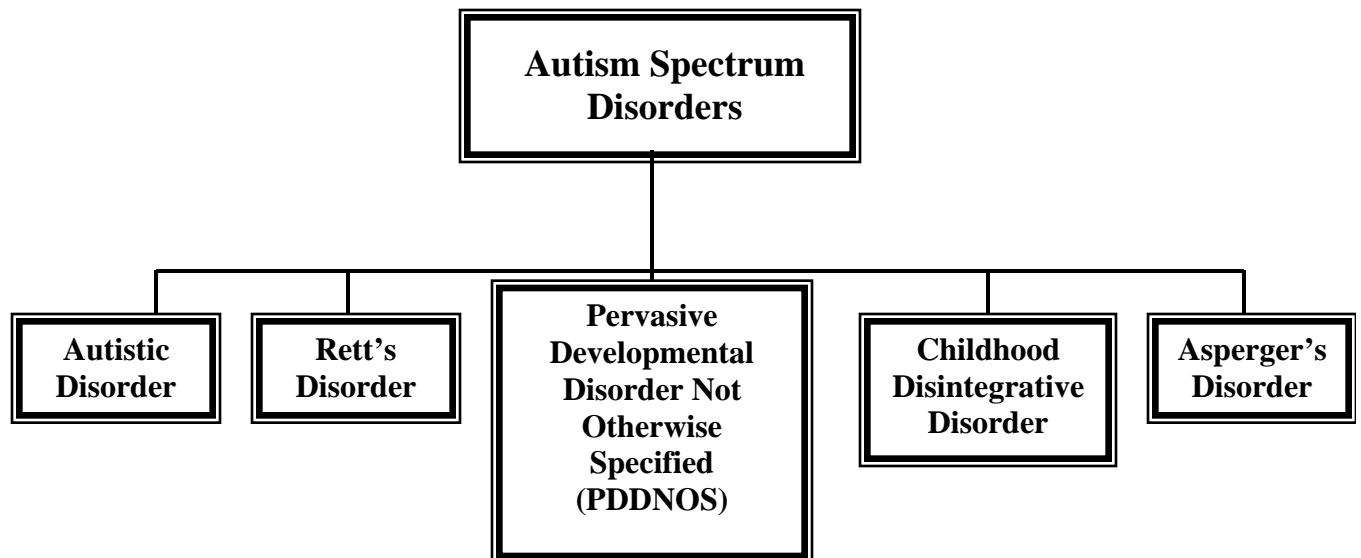
Ad Hoc Committee on Autism

**February 2000
Revised October 2001**

Nebraska State Plan For Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Definition

ASD is a lifelong neurodevelopment disability, a behaviorally definite syndrome that is recognized by the manifestation of behavioral characteristics across multiple areas of functioning. Characteristics are observed, to varying degrees, in social relationships, communicative competence, pattern and range of interests, and sensory responsiveness. These characteristics are generally evident during the child's early years, and **must adversely affect** educational performance. The definition of ASD has been written sufficiently broad to encompass children who exhibit a range of characteristics related to ASD. This includes Autistic Disorder, Rett's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. Children with mental retardation or significant behavior disorders are not automatically excluded since, in many cases, these conditions coexist with ASD.



Guiding Principals: Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

1. Individuals closest to the child, especially the parents, in consultation with professionals and in some instances with the child, are in the best position to make educational program decisions for children.
 - Parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) should be aware of all the educational options available for their children
 - Decision-making in planning for the education of children with ASD must include professionals trained in the education of children with ASD.
 - Parent education and staff development are essential components for meeting the needs of children with ASD.
2. A system for early identification and intervention services will be developed and implemented
3. An array of educational services allowing movement within the options will be available for children with ASD
 - Strong partnerships among parents, school districts, services providers and agencies are vital to meet the needs of children with ASD.
 - Professionals and assistants providing direct and consultative services to children with ASD must be trained and skilled in this discipline.
 - The Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations Office, (NDE-SPED) in conjunction with the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Barkley Memorial Center, (UNL) will provide resources (informational, technical assistance, and professional support) to assist parents, schools and communities with decision-making for education of children with ASD.

Access to Services

All children with ASD in Nebraska shall have access to a free appropriate public education via one of the following options:

1. Local school district program; or
2. Neighboring school district or cooperative through contract or option enrollment (school age); or
3. Regional services through the Nebraska statewide network.

Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations Office (NDE-SPED), And The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Barkley Memorial Center, (UNL) Roles

The Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations Office, (NDE-SPED-SPED) and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Barkley Memorial Center, (UNL) will enter into an agreement whereby the two agencies will work jointly and collaboratively to ensure that the Plan for Children with ASD is carried out effectively and efficiently. The NDE-SPED Office will

assume responsibility for the infrastructure, network, ASD standing committee and funding. UNL's primary role is the provision of training, in-service and staff development on state, regional and local levels, as a resource to regional programs and program support at the state level.

The Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations Office and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Barkley Center will jointly support the position of Nebraska's Coordinator for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Position Title:

Nebraska Project Coordinator for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Required Qualifications:

- Master's Degree in Special Education or related field
- Appropriate certification or licensure to work directly with students with ASD, educational staff and families in Nebraska
- Three years or more of professional and/or public school work with children and youth that have ASD.
- Knowledge and understanding of the best practices' in intervention with students with ASD as well as experience implementing diverse empirically supported treatment approaches.
- Experience providing leadership and collaboration with educational and agency personnel

Preferred Qualifications:

- Professional leadership influences centered on ASD and other special education students within state, local and college/university settings including:
- PhD. In Special Education or related field
- Public school employment
- Conducting staff development training/workshops
- Teaching at the college level
- Coordinating and collaborating between diverse educational personnel and agency staff
- Development of curricular or teaching materials]
- Directing/supervising personnel who serve children/youth with ASD
- Publication in ASD or related areas.

Responsibilities of NDE-SPED and UNL:

- Plan, coordinate and deliver regional and statewide training and/or staff development for ASD educators, ASD assessment teams, general educators, Para educators, parents, and community.
- Develop appropriate curricular or teaching materials.
- Maintain information on ASD resources (people, web sites, programs, methodologies, etc.). Assist school districts with initial ASD assessment information and scheduling, or referral to regional ASD teams when needed.

- Organize and coordinate a comprehensive program of outreach, involving dissemination of information on Nebraska ASD Network to families, staff, and communities.
- Chair/facilitate the Special Education Advisory Council Standing Committee on ASD
- Develop and maintain ASD web site home page information on the NDE-SPED Special Education home page and others as appropriate
- Maintain information about ASD regional programs and library materials available.
- Act as liaison to provide an integrated support system for families of children with ASD (e.g., Dept. Of Health and Human Services, physicians, transition teams, Developmental Disabilities Council)
- Work with the Nebraska Coordinating Council for Post Secondary Education to develop an adequate pool of qualified personnel to work with students with ASD
- Act as liaison for parent and professional ASD organizations
- Establish regional and state ASD Network

Regional and State ASD Network

An ASD Network will be created within the Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations Office. ASD Network services include technical assistance, expert consultation, materials and supplies and financial resources. The Network is viewed as an integral part of the statewide system and a means for ensuring quality educational opportunities for children with ASD in Nebraska. The NDE-SPED will provide support for school districts, educational service units, regular service teams formed by partnership agreements and parents of children with ASD. Network services will encompass the **Guiding Principles for Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (page 2)**, and will include, but not be limited to.

- Services standards
- SEAC
- ASD standing committee
- Regional services
- Competencies for professionals

All families of children with ASD will be made aware of the availability of ASD Network services. The public will be informed about the needs of and services available for children with ASD. The ASD Network will support the provision of appropriate assessment services to children with ASD by offering an array of qualified professional assessment service providers and identifying strategies for appropriate referral.

- A. The ASD Network will facilitate and provide consultation in the areas of child assessment, program development and evaluation. Parent and professional training will be made available. Consultation will include, but not be limited to the following services
 - Support and the provision of appropriate educational services by identifying an array of qualified professional direct service providers and consultants
 - Assistance to parents and districts in providing access to a full array of appropriate services
 - Assistance in the areas of long term transition planning and supplemental educational and social opportunities for families of children with ASD.

- Support for the provisions of appropriate family services by identifying and providing access to qualified direct service providers and consultants. Parent and family resource centers and information networks will be promoted and strengthened
 - The creation of a system for locating, maintaining and training local personnel resources and establishing, promoting and/or strengthening in-service options.
- B. Establish and maintain a database of services for children with ASD.
- C. Establish and maintain a network of communication among stakeholders.
- D. Establish and maintain an information clearinghouse.
- E. Serve as the broker of services, as needed.
- F. Facilitate the development of partnership agreements among parents, school districts, regional/statewide programs, service providers and agencies to assure all children with ASD have a free appropriate public education and that an array of appropriate services are available.
- G. Provide opportunities for parents, children, classmates and professionals to learn about ASD. These opportunities will be available on an ongoing basis and through summer programs.
- H. Arrange for and if necessary, provide staff to act as multidisciplinary and Individual Education Program (IEP) team members when appropriate staff is not available at the school district or regional level.
- I. NDE-SPED and UNL will make every effort to collaborate with and include in the ASD Network existing and future programs for children with ASD, (i.e., Munroe-Meyer Institute).

Standards for Teaching Students with ASD

It is recommended that the Department of Education, Special Populations Office (NDE-SPED) with the assistance of the University of Nebraska Lincoln Barkley Center (UNL-Barkley Center) will develop a set of standards for teaching children with ASD. This should include competencies needed by teachers working with these children and the required elements of any service the child may receive. The standards should focus on quality elements beyond basic compliance standards.

It is further recommended that the Nebraska Department of Education support the establishment of statewide graduate level training in the area of ASD. The Department of Education should collaborate with the University of Nebraska to provide the statewide delivery of coursework.

SEAC and ASD Standing Committee

The Nebraska Department of Education and the State Board of Education will seek advice regarding programs for children with ASD from the Nebraska Special Education Advisory

Council. SEAC will seek advice from the ASD Advisory Committee, a standing committee of SEAC, for the education of children with ASD.

Rationale:

Selecting and providing appropriate services and evaluations for a child with ASD is a difficult, on-going task. It is a challenge for professionals and parents to keep up-to-date on current methodologies and services. Nebraska's ASD population is small and is logically served using a regional concept.

Responsibilities:

This committee will provide advice for NDE, the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) and the University of Nebraska, (UNL) on the following:

- The delivery of appropriate services for children with ASD.
- The review of current pertinent research and information regarding methodologies and delivery systems for ASD.
- The review of all due process trends associated with children with ASD.
- Recommendations for ASD training of educators, parents and community.
- Recommendations for ASD teaching competencies.

Meetings:

The ASD Standing Committee will meet at least two times each year. A quorum (simple majority) of members must be present for all matters of official business.

Membership:

The Commissioner of Education will approve membership on the recommendation of the SEAC and Special Populations Administrator. Approved members will be eligible for expenses as per NDE-SPED guidelines and will include representation from at least the following:

- NDE-SPED Consultant (non-voting).
- Director, Severe Disabilities Program, UNL (non-voting).
- Nebraska's Project Coordinator of Services for Children with ASD (non-Voting).
- Representative(s) from SEAC (Special Education Advisory Council).
- Parent(s) and parent group(s).
- Representative(s) from college or university.
- Local director(s) of SPED.
- Educator(s) and therapist(s) of children with ASD.
- Representative(s) from the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council.
- Advocate(s) or persons with ASD.

- Representative(s) from other state agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities.
- Representative(s) of a vocational, community or business organization providing transition service to children with disabilities.

Meeting Procedures:

The committee will first attempt to reach consensus on issues. If consensus is not reached, a formal vote should be taken.

Terms of Membership:

Appointments to the committee will be for four years beginning September for the first year and ending in August of the fourth year. If any member misses two scheduled meetings in a given year the Chair/Facilitator will forward a recommendation to the Administrator of the Special Populations Office that the member be replaced.

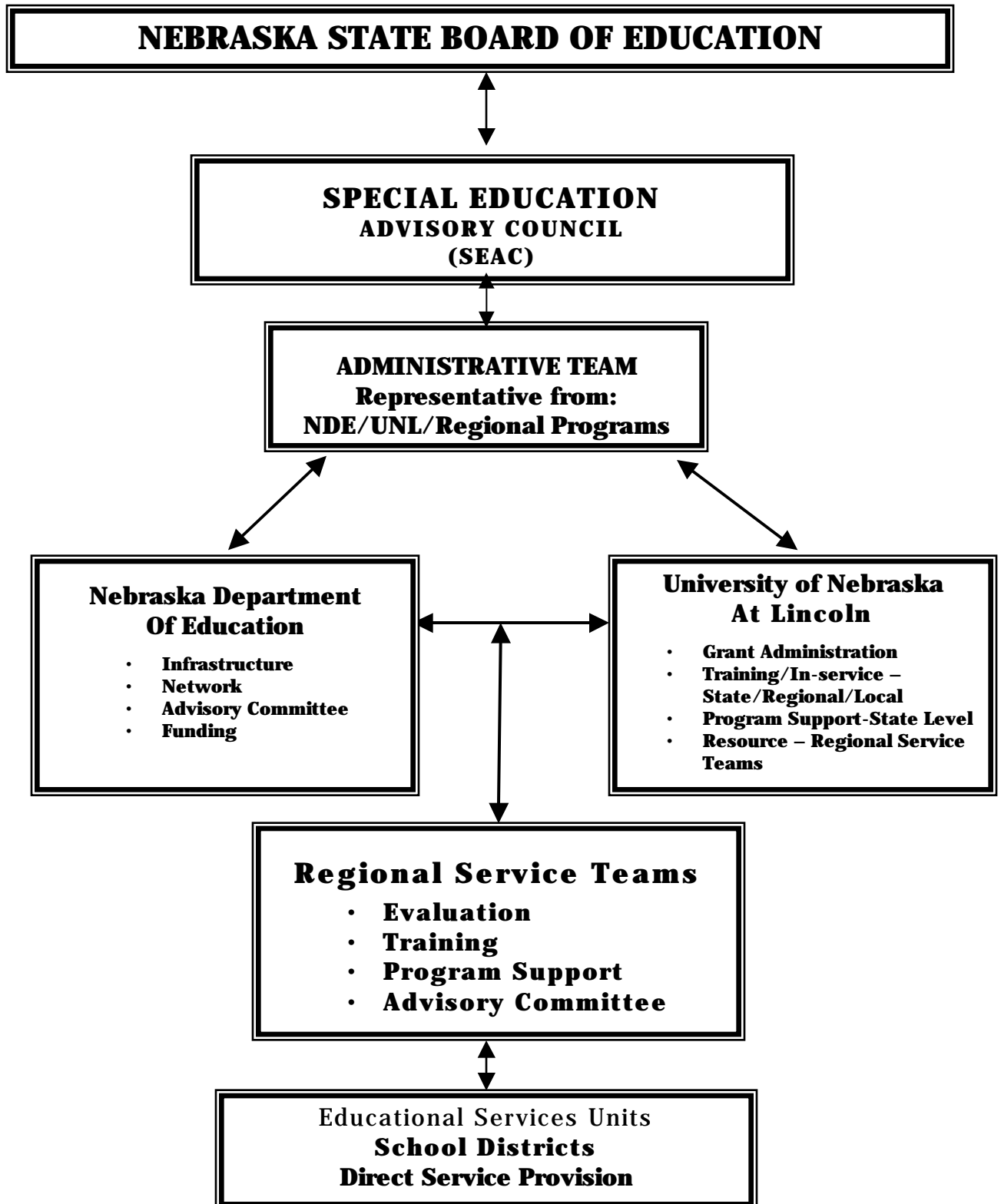
NOTE: *During the first meeting of this committee a one-time lottery will be conducted resulting in _ of the initial committee serving a one-year term; _ a two-year term, _ a three year term, and _ a four year term.*

Members will serve for no more than one consecutive four-year term, but may serve an additional term at a future time if asked to do so.

Any member appointed by the Commissioner to replace a resigning member would complete the resigning member's remaining term on the committee. At the end of that remaining term, the Administrator of the Special Populations Office may recommend that the Commissioner reappoint that member for an additional full four-year term.

Report: The NDE-SPED Consultant will report all meeting proceedings to the Special Education Advisory Council and the Administrator for the Special Populations Office within 10 working days following each scheduled committee meeting

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER STATE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



Regional Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Due to the relatively low incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), schools sometimes struggle to find qualified, knowledgeable staff to provide evaluation and program planning and implementation for these children. The large geographic area of our state, coupled with its sparse population, has compounded this challenge. In response to this need, it is recommended that the Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations Office develop four (4) regional service teams to provide direct assistance to local school districts in the areas of assessment, program planning and program implementation for children with ASD.

The regional ASD service teams should be available to local school districts or educational cooperatives and to parents of children birth to age 21 with ASD. The purpose of the teams will be to bring quality education and intervention to all children in the state who have ASD.

It is recommended that the regional ASD service teams be comprised of:

- a school psychologist,
- an occupational therapist,
- a physical therapist,
- a speech/language pathologist, and
- an early childhood special educator,
- a teacher of children with multiple and or severe/profound disabilities,
- a secondary special educator,
- a rehabilitation counselor,
- representatives from community human service agencies,
- parent advocates and
- parent of a child with ASD.

A Regional Services Administrator will be designated for each Regional ASD Service Team. All team members will have a special interest, experience and training in the identification of children with ASD. Team members will participate in ongoing training to keep current of the latest research and practice.

An advisory committee will be established in each region. Members will include representation from at least, but not limited to the following:

- Educators
- Therapists
- Parents or Parent Groups
- Advocates or Persons with ASD

The committee will support, promote and make recommendations regarding the development of best practices in serving children with ASD within the region.

NDE-SPED and UNL Roles

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE-SPED) will pursue the establishment of regional/statewide program agreements involving school districts, approved cooperatives and educational service units for meeting the educational needs of children with ASD to begin no later than the 2001 – 2002 school year.

- Regional ASD service teams will be developed to represent the state in strategic geographic areas.
- School districts, approved cooperatives and educational services units entering into state approved regional ASD service agreements will receive support that may include staff development, grants, technical assistance and services from the Nebraska ASD network to enhance their services for children with ASD, and meet the specifications outlined in this document for regional services. NDE-SPED and UNL and the regional ASD service teams will use the **“The Nebraska Guiding Principles for Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders”** (page 2) in developing services and planning for program improvement.
- In collaboration with state approved regional service teams NDE-SPED and UNL will design and implement staff development activities in the approved regional/statewide teams that will be involved with the provision of educational services to children with ASD.
- The staff development activities will be designed to meet the needs of regular and special education administrators and teachers, educational assistants, related services staff and other personnel. Collaboration with university coursework will be initiated.

Identification & Referral: Suggested Processes for Assessment and Program Planning

When a child is referred for an evaluation and the child is exhibiting characteristics related to ASD, or when a child enters a district having a previous diagnosis of ASD, the local district or approved cooperative will contact the regional coordinator from their regional ASD service team.

- The coordinator from the regional service team will be contacted so that data can be collected on the number of possible ASD referrals and the number of identified individuals in the state can be documented. The regional coordinator will contact the local team and help them determine if they need assistance in the evaluation process.
- Local teams will be responsible for identifying, referring and submitting data to the regional service coordinator.
- Local teams will understand Rule 51 compliance standards, regulations and dispute resolution options.

The regional service team would be available to assist the local team in planning for appropriate assessment and services using the following process.

1. Is further evaluation needed?
 - If not, the team will move ahead to program planning.

- If so, the regional coordinator may help the local team (local school district) determine which local providers are able to do appropriate assessment, and which multidisciplinary evaluation team (MDT) members, if any, will need to be secured from the regional team. A designated local team member will provide information on the assessment process, and other resources to the family.
2. Are appropriate personnel, assessment tools and materials available locally?
 - If not, they will be secured from regional team members, NDE-SPED or UNL.
 - The assessment should follow Rule 51 guidelines for the referral and identification process.
 - The family should be involved in any decision to extend the assessment period.
 - Any professional working with this family should provide information to help the family understand the ramifications of the verification of ASD. The formal verification meeting would follow.
 3. The MDT confirms ASD. If ASD. If ASD is not verified, but characteristics of ASD are documented, the regional team may be contacted to assist in program planning.
 4. The local team will work to develop the individual education plan (IEP).
 - The regional coordinator or another team member would be available to the local team to provide the support needed.
 - Local resources will be used when possible, to enable the local education team to provide quality, appropriate intervention as soon as possible.
 - An individual education plan (IEP) or individual family service plan (IFSP) will be developed and a meeting held in accordance with federal and state regulations.
 5. At the IEP or IFSP meeting the team will decide what technical support is needed for the direct service providers. The regional ASD service team will have contact with the local school to help develop the appropriate educational services for the child.
 6. Further training, in-service, for technical assistance coordination with statewide training opportunities will also be encouraged.
 7. Regional service team members may be a part of the ongoing support. The child/family should be referred to the Developmental Disabilities System and other programs and resources as appropriate to help provide supports outside the school setting. At the IEP or IFSP meeting the parents will be provided information about the Developmental Disability System (DDS).

Family Involvement

The success of any child's participation in his or her community is dependent on collaboration among family, the school and community. Families should be provided comprehensive information and support related to family-identified needs, educational options, legal rights and

community services, as soon as ASD is verified. Families serve a key role and must be involved from the very beginning and throughout the provision of services.

Local School District Role

The school district role will be as follows:

- School districts will assure that all children with ASD have available a free appropriate public education which includes special education and related services to meet their unique needs.
- School districts will assure an array of placement options is available for children with ASD.
- School districts may provide education and related services by contracting with another school district, approved cooperative or with a service provider approved by the Department of Education.
- School districts may develop partnership agreements with other school districts, educational service units, cooperatives and the Department of Education to meet the needs of children with ASD.
- School districts shall meet the standards **92 NAC 51**, Nebraska Department of Education Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs (Rule 51).
- School districts should offer parent education services which provide information and family support.
- All school districts and approved cooperatives (even if they do not enter into a state approved regional program or statewide program agreement) will continue to be eligible for special education reimbursement payment if they meet the standards of **92 NAC 51**.

Teacher and Therapist Competencies and Qualifications of Service Providers

All professionals who provide services to a child with ASD shall hold appropriate licensure and/or certification from the state and should have an understanding of the primary characteristics of ASD and its impact on learning and development. These individuals should be knowledgeable in a range of assessment and intervention methodologies.

Basic Qualifications

Educational staff working with children with ASD should have the following knowledge and skills specifically related to ASD:

- Be familiar with a variety of assessment methods.
- Use assessment information to design interventions.
- Apply positive behavior management techniques during assessment and instruction.
- Have knowledge and strategies to improve communication skills.
- Be knowledgeable about techniques to improve social interaction.
- Have knowledge of accommodations and interventions related to sensory differences.
- Be aware of current legal issues impacting services to children with ASD.
- Understand differences in the learning profiles of children with ASD.

Recommendations:

1. All teachers identified by the school district as having primary responsibility for implementing the IEP or IFSP of a child with ASD will be required to complete a state approved in-service on specific strategies, methods, characteristics and instructional accommodations for working with children having ASD. It is also recommended that university credit be available to those who desire it for this service.
2. Documentation will be maintained of ongoing training in the competency or skill areas, which includes training sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Education, additional workshops, course work, or other professional experiences. It is suggested that this training be a minimum of twelve-(12) clock hour within each 2-year span.
3. Teachers will demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement of skills with additional annual training in areas related to ASD.
4. Teachers will maintain professional documentation, which includes:
 - A file within the district documenting Certified Education Units (CEU) or clock hours in the area of competence.
 - Samples of documentation of their ability to effect child progress (e.g., IEP or IFSP periodic reviews, consultations feed back, behavior charts, letters, evaluations and professional recognitions).

Areas and Topics for Training

Statewide training coordinated with the University of Nebraska or other higher education institutions should be tailored to meet the needs of individuals within a district, cooperative or ESU area and may include such topics as:

- | | |
|--|--|
| _ Accommodations for sensory difference | _ Developmental assessment |
| _ Assessment and elevation procedures | _ Discrete trail training |
| _ Adapting curriculum | _ Effective teaching strategies |
| _ Augmentative/alternative communication | _ Functional analysis of behavior |
| _ Charting child progress | _ Laws and regulations impacting services to Children with ASD |
| _ Classroom organization/management | _ Parent-Professional collaboration |
| _ Characteristics and implications of ASD | _ Positive behavioral interventions |
| _ Characteristics of different interventions and Methodologies | _ Role of play, leisure, recreation in program planning and |
| _ Collaborative planning and teaching implementation | |
| _ Current legal issues | _ Strategies to improve social interaction |
| _ Current research | _ Transitions (Infant _ Preschool _ |
| _ Data based decision-making | _ School Age _ Community) |
| _ Sibling training | _ Peer Training for Classmates |

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Nebraska State Plan

**Presented by
Special Education Advisory Council
Ad Hoc Committee**

on

Autism

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Proposed Nebraska State Plan

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